



Committee	FULL COUNCIL
Date	20 SEPTEMBER 2023
Title	LEADER'S UPDATE REPORT
Report of	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

1. Traditionally the summer period can be a quieter period for councils, but I think we can all agree that the council remains busy in delivery its services to our local residents. I have always been very clear that the focus for the Alliance will be our residents and communities and my update focuses on providing information on some of the many aspects of this work that the council is delivering.
2. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) annual review of complaints was published on 26 July. The LGSCO fully investigated 13 complaints between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. It is encouraging to see the number upheld has decreased from 67 per cent (2021/2022) to 54 per cent. This is considerably lower than the national average of 72 per cent for similar authorities. We have maintained a 100 per cent compliance rate, compared to an average of 99 per cent in similar authorities.
3. The Benefits Service has received confirmation from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) that they have written to their tax credit customers to commence the process of transferring these claims to universal credit and to advise that plans are in place to transfer customers receiving legacy benefits which includes Housing Benefit are not expected to commence until April 24 at the earliest. Although the DWP have set up a customer help line the benefit advisors are providing support and advice to enable a smooth transition for our residents. I thank the staff for their dedication and support.
4. The Human Resources and Learning and Development teams have worked with the Centre for Aging Better to develop a case study for their website which highlights the council's commitment to being an age friendly employer and acknowledges the value that older people play in the workforce bringing with them important life skills. We are proud that nearly one in five of our apprentices are aged 50 and over which is about the same proportion as to those who are aged 16-24. We continue to work hard to create career paths for all roles, from social workers to carers to teachers and to offer flexible working arrangements to create and culture a diverse workforce.
5. The LGA Cyber 360 team spent three days with the council from 19 June and the recommendations from this visit will be used to help further develop our Cyber

Security Strategy to ensure that we maintain our “strong position in terms of technical controls and capabilities to mitigate cyber security risks”. As we look towards the future the strategy will set out areas for review and where we will explore new areas of focus, starting activities when these prove to be achievable within resources.

6. I was both excited and proud to learn of the £3.1m awarded to the council by the UK Govt Youth Investment Fund to help refurbish Sandown Town Hall. As an administration we took decisive action to spend the funds awarded on a High Street Task force, and our Corporate Strategy to call for action on derelict buildings. The entire Regen team did an outstanding job on securing this funding. It is my aim that as much as possible of the £3.1m will be using local supplies and contractors therefore continuing to commit to Alliance priority of the circular economy. Improving facilities for young people in the bay area are one of the emerging Bay Place Plan and bringing one of our own derelict buildings back into use after MANY years of uncertainty will hopefully act as an example to other owners.
7. We have also successfully worked in partnership with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, to commission services for victims/survivors of domestic abuse, and for those using abusive behaviours. These will be delivered by the Youth Trust and the Hampton Trust respectively. The contracts will provide support for victims/survivors of domestic abuse and those using abusive behaviours using a range of methods including community-based provision, refuge and safe accommodation, group work, training and awareness raising.
8. Following the decisive action of the Alliance Group, the very successful installation of a new roof (it leaked over 40 years ago when I worked there), the Lord Louis Library reopens fully to the public on Thursday 14 September, following a 6-month period of operating a limited service from the area of the building which is normally the children’s library.
9. The newly roofed lending library now also benefits from improved lighting, an innovative ventilation system, new carpet and decorated walls. The library staff have been amazing – in moving everything into the children’s library, in adapting to their new surroundings during the busy summer period, and now in moving everything back to its proper position.
10. They are now looking forward to welcoming visitors into the new water-tight space, and resuming the huge range of popular activities that took place before these essential repairs started. I wish to express my sincere and whole-hearted thanks to all the staff that worked tirelessly to get this done.
11. Just one of the programmes that the Library Service has been engaged in over the summer has been Ready, Set, Read! This year’s Summer Reading Challenge has been a great success in all Island libraries. The challenge runs until September 9, so final figures aren’t in yet, but current indications are that almost 1900 children took part in the challenge – over 10% up on last year. Libraries held a wide variety of tie-in events throughout the summer, including author events, craft sessions, story sessions and talks, as well as their regular events, such as Rhyme Times and Lego Club. Before the holidays, library staff visited school assemblies to tell children about the challenge, and this inspired many children to join the library for the first time. Across the summer holidays, 425 children received their first library cards.

12. We also continue to work with partners to promote winter vaccinations for flu and COVID. Vaccination helps to protect against severe illness, hospitalisations and deaths from COVID-19. People who received an autumn booster vaccine last year were around 53% less likely to go to the hospital with COVID-19 in the two to four weeks after getting vaccinated, compared to those who didn't get a booster.